

# Hooked and stressed?



Lots of young people say vaping helps them deal with stress. It can feel like it takes the edge off in the moment, but that feeling doesn't last.

Nicotine switches your body into "high alert" mode. It raises your heart rate and tells your brain to stay switched on. Once the nicotine wears off, your body reacts by increasing tension and irritability. That's when cravings hit, and stress can feel even worse than before.

Dave explains how he got hooked:

*"I started out just having hits off my mates, and then it went to 'ooh I'll buy one, ooh I'll buy another' and all of a sudden, I'm addicted and I can't stop. The cravings slowly get worse and worse. It overwhelms you."*

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## So, what's really going on?

The "calm" feeling comes from nicotine acting fast on your body, not from stress actually disappearing. Each drop in nicotine can trigger restlessness and pressure, making your body depend on the next hit just to level out.

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## Why age matters

Your stress response is still learning how to settle itself. Nicotine can make it quicker to flare up and harder to calm down on its own. Over time, that can turn everyday pressure into something that feels constant.

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## Get the facts

If vaping doesn't feel good anymore, that matters. You're not weak for finding it hard to stop, nicotine is designed to keep you hooked. The right support can make things feel more manageable again. You don't have to do it alone.

👉 Visit: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/VapeBrain](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/VapeBrain)

# Anxious and depressed?

Some young people turn to vaping when they're feeling anxious, low or overwhelmed. For a short while it might feel distracting, but nicotine doesn't fix what's underneath.

When nicotine levels drop, anxiety can rise suddenly. That can leave you feeling on edge, flat or unsettled, making vaping feel like something you need to get through the day.



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## So, what's really going on?

Nicotine changes the way your brain controls mood. It can cause quick mood lifts followed by sharper drops, which can intensify feelings of anxiety or sadness between hits.

This cycle can trick your brain into thinking vaping is helping, when it's actually deepening the lows between hits.

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## Why age matters

Your brain is still developing the systems that manage emotions and resilience. Nicotine can make emotions feel stronger and less predictable, which can increase mood swings, especially if things already feel tough.

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## Get the facts

Feeling low or anxious doesn't mean something is wrong with you. It means your brain is reacting to nicotine.

You deserve support that helps you feel more stable over time, not stuck on a rollercoaster of ups and downs.

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## Not worth the hype?



Vapes are often made to look fun, harmless and easy to control. But nicotine can quickly turn it into something that feels hard to control.

Nicotine affects the brain’s reward system. Over time, the brain needs more to feel the same effect, which can lead to cravings, frustration and anxiety.

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### So, what’s really going on?

Vapes deliver nicotine in a smooth, fast way. The brain quickly learns to link that hit with feeling okay. Eventually, vaping can stop feeling like a choice and start feeling like something you *have* to do just to feel normal.

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### Why age matters

Young people’s brains respond more strongly to rewards and cravings. That makes getting hooked easier and quitting feel tougher, even when you want to stop.

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### Get the facts

Knowing how vaping really works gives you more control over your choices, instead of being led by the hype.

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## Wish you never started?

Many people start vaping thinking it's safer or easier to stop later. But nicotine can make quitting much harder than expected.

Cravings, irritability and restlessness aren't a lack of willpower, they're signs of nicotine leaving your system.



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### So, what's really going on?

Nicotine acts quickly on the brain, making your body adjust to having it around. When it's not there, everything can feel tense and uncomfortable, which can make stopping feel frustrating, even when you really want to quit.

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### Why age matters

Nicotine affects a developing brain more strongly, which can make habits set in deeper and cravings feel more intense. That's why stopping earlier can make a real difference, before vaping becomes something your brain expects.

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### Get the facts

If you regret starting, you're not alone. Wanting to stop doesn't mean you've failed, it means you want something better for yourself. There is support available that understands what young people are dealing with and helps without judgement.

You don't have to figure this out on your own.

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